

Summary of Watershed-Based Mitigation Subcommittee Meeting

Jan. 18, 2005, 10:00 AM – 1:30 PM

Natural Resources Building, Room 537, Olympia

Attendees:

- Fish and Wildlife: Peter Birch, John Carleton, Margen Carlson, and Bob Zeigler
- Natural Resources: Hugo Flores
- Association of Washington Cities: Jackie White
- Washington State Association of Counties: Andy Mayer
- HDR/EES: Rick Anderson
- Regional Fish Enhancement Groups: Sheila North
- Army Corps of Engineers: Kate Stenberg
- Transportation: Barb Aberle, Gary Davis, Dick Gersib, and Tim Hilliard
- NOAA / NWFSC: George Pess

Updates:

Barb Aberle updated us on the Regional Fish Enhancement Groups project. The RFEG language from the scope of work we addressed in the last meeting is updated but the final version will not be available until an attorney for WSDOT can take a look at it soon. It has all the changes from this committee and no other changes. The RFEG folks sent out the RFP already, and got five responses, all from Westside groups. These are from groups in Hood Canal, the Nooksack, South Puget Sound, the Lower Columbia, and Stillaguamish / Snohomish. The Skagit Cooperative expressed concerns about the creation of more priority lists, and asked why the RFEGs are the ones compiling this one. The response is that this is a pilot, we will see what they can do. Sheila North commented that she has yet to see the revised scope of work. She also said that the responses to the RFP were enthusiastic. Sheila plans to attend (or call in to) the subcommittee meetings.

Dick Gersib asked if the subcommittee needed an update on the SR-167 watershed characterization, or if the e-mailed SR-167 project updates are enough. The group consensus was that the e-mail suffices.

Margen Carlson talked about the mitigation optimization effort. Tim Smith (WDFW) and Megan White (WSDOT) attended the quarterly directors' meeting (WDFW, WSDOT, Ecology) to discuss the effort. They received direction to make certain to use existing initiatives, labels, etc. The concept of MAPT teams was specifically mentioned. They are invited back next meeting as well. Rick Anderson also met with Tim and Megan and urged that the systems that he is developing in conjunction with this subcommittee be merged with their effort.

Update on HDR / EES Pilots (Rick Anderson):

SR-539: Rick mentioned that in this test (but not the others) they are documenting opportunities to avoid or minimize impacts. There was a discussion of the TPEAC provision that DOT draft permits for SR-539, is this part of that effort. Rick replied that the effort now is to coordinate everyone's input, incorporate their work into the permits.

US-12: Showed air photos of possible routes. There are three, one of which is similar to the current route, one of which runs well north of the river, while the third runs well south of the river. Each

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has certain impacts and benefits that the others don't. The route to the north avoids most of the aquatic impacts, but runs through endangered shrub-steppe and areas with possible cultural resource impacts. They are having a two-day meeting with field visits in February to hammer out details. John Carleton asked whether all affected tribes were involved – Rick believes so but isn't sure, the region is the lead. Sheila North asked if the RFEGs could attend the next meeting and Rick said he would check.

NOAA Fish Watershed and Landscape Research (George Pess):

George is from NOAA's Northwest Fisheries Science Center. He talked about their work with emphasis on the following questions:

- What is the watershed and landscape research that NOAA has done and is working on?
- Are there watershed principles that you think we should incorporate into methods identifying best mitigation sites on a landscape or watershed basis?
- Are you seeing trends or core concepts in the science the Center is doing?
- When attempting to look at resources such as salmonids over large areas such as watershed, what existing and potential conditions are most important to evaluate?
- Are there limitations we should be aware of?

He emphasized that when you are attempting to look at resources such as salmonids over large areas such as watershed, you should not exclude species or life stages and histories, and that you need to understand the historic and current natural potential of each location. A holistic look avoids "short-changing" one species.

Usually we ask "What are the biological responses to habitat change?" but we should also ask "where have habitat-forming processes been altered and resulted in habitat change?"

His examples included watershed process analyses (flow, sediment, riparian), habitat capacity analyses (remote based, field based), wetlands, floodplains, beavers, and fish, pre-spawning mortality, and bull trout movement.

Watershed process analyses are coarse-scale "screens" to identify where processes are disrupted; the next step is to analyze at finer scale (field inventories) to assess where restoration actions would be beneficial.

He talked in more detail about sediment supply analysis, riparian function analysis, beaver ponds in large river floodplains, sub-lethal effects of copper on coho salmon, bull trout movement on the Olympic Peninsula, and managing around uncertainty.

Next Meeting and Adjournment:

The next meeting will be Tuesday, Feb. 15, Natural Resources Building, Room 537 (Director's Conference Room).

Meeting adjourned 1:50 PM